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SUFFICIENT DEMAND**

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GENE AUTRY

...
"WHEN
GUN HANDS
MEET"

A LETTER,
WRITTEN
A MONTH AGO,
FINALLY
CATCHES UP
WITH GENE...

IT'S FROM MY OLD BOSS,
SAM VOORER OF THE CROSSB!
HMMH ... SAYS "... THE
COWBOY COULD USE SOME
GOOD BATTLE HANDS! BEANS
LIKE GOOD COWBOYS
SCARE EASIER
THREE DAYS THAN
WHEN YOU WERE
FEDERMAN OF
THE CROSSB ..."

POST
OFFICE
CROSSB

... MY DAUGHTER JOCKE ANNA, WHO WAS
A PRETTY-FACED KID OF TEN WHEN
YOU LAST SAW HER, WENT EAST TO
SCHOOL. RIGHT AFTER HER MA DIED!
SO I'M ALONE IN THE BUSHOUSE DEED
IN TOWN, WHEN YOU'RE RIDING BY!
AND COME UNDER AN ALIAS!
YOUR OLD BOSS, SAM VOORER!

"HAWK RIDER RABY ... COME UNDER
AN ALIAS!" THAT'S OLD SAYS WAY OF
OF SAYING HE'S IN BAD TROUBLE. MY
HOPES I CAN HELP! BUT IT WAS A
MONTH AGO HE WROTE THE LETTER!

WE MIGHT BE TOO LATE, CHAMP,
BUT WERE HEADING FOR TEN
CLOCK TOWN IN THE OLD
CROSSB ... RIGHT NOW!

THREE DAYS LATER...

HERE'S HERE, CHAMP, AN' I
RECKON WE'D BETTER BE
ON THE HORN-BAG. BORN
OF US! BUT YOU
FIRST, AN' A
GOOD RUB DOWN!









I'VE LOST MY PRECIOUS, BUT IN THE SAME WISE YOU'RE THAT YOU USED TO TOTE AROUND THE COWBOY'S SEARCH FOR IN YOUR SHOULDER TEN YEARS AGO, SOME ARTIST.



YOU FIGURED HE OUT QUICKER I FIGURED YOU RIGHT! BUT THEN I HADN'T CHANGED SO MUCH... AN 'ARTIST' OF YOU AS BEING BACK EAST IN SCHOOL KINDA THREW ME OFF THE TRACK!



I GOT THE MONTH-OLD LETTER FROM YOUR DAD THREE DAYS AGO AND CAME HERE AS FAST AS I COULD... HAVE YOU GOT ANY CLUE AS TO WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

NOTHING DEFINITE! THAT'S WHY I'M WORKING AT THE RESTAURANT AS BUSY HARD!



DAD NEVER WROTE ABOUT HIS TROUBLES... MY FIRST WARNING CAME AS A MAIL FROM JOHNNY NELSON, A NEIGHBOR I NEVER MET... THE TELEGRAM SAID 'YOUR FATHER MISSING - DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO COME HOME NOW - WAIT FOR LETTER'... BUT I COULDN'T WAIT! HE TALKED TO JOHNNY NELSON BUT HE DOESN'T KNOW IF SAM YOURS' DAUGHTER! NOBODY DOES BUT YOU, GIRL!



LOOK THERE! DEAD CATTLE!

THAT'S ONE THING I WANTED TO SHOW YOU!



FILLED WITH POISONED BAIT LIKE ANY ALL OF 'EM WEREN'T A FORTUNE BRAND? WHO SAYS THAT LEON, BOSS?

JOHNNY NELSON! DOES THAT MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

























THAT AFTERNOON WHEELER, ACCOMPANIED BY BUTHAM, SANDS AND CAPTAIN INTO THE TOWN OF TEN SUBJECTS...

WELL, BUREAU, THE HAVE CAUGHT TWO OF YOUR CON-STABLES! BOY FRIENDS... WE'LL HAVE THE OTHERS IN JAIL, PRETTY SOON! WANT?



THEY SLEEP IS GOING TO THE DOGS WITH YOU, WHEN THEY BRING A MAN LIKE WALTER LARSON FOR JUSTICE! I GOT WANTED TO SELL MY LIVERY STABLES AND CLERE OUT!

MONK, WILL YOU DO ME A FAVOR?



WHY WORRY, MISS MOON? ANYTHING I CAN? WHAT IS IT?

LEND ME A GUN... AND SAY NOTHING TO ANYBODY!



IT' BARE GET DARK, YENET! YOU THINK DRY BEANS, LE GOING FROM THE RESTAURANT?

DEEPLY, WHEN THEY GET AROUND TO IT... I'M WORRIED ABOUT THEIR COOKING! JOHNNY, WHAT THEY DID US?



SOMEBODY BRING SOME NOW! IT'S THE DARK, BUTHAM AND HIS PET DEBENTY AN' AN' ROBERT! SIT SOME GRUB!



IT'S A SHAME! YOU CAN'T FEED PRISONERS ON JUST SOUP!

THEY WON'T BE DOING ANY HARD WORK TILL THEY EAT SOME HARD MEAT!









THE HOURS LATER THEY REACH THE BUTTES ...

JEANNN, DID YOU SAY
THAT OLD LONE CAMP
WAS CORRECT?
I SEE A LIGHT
OVER HORIZON!

YOU'RE RIGHT, JOE!
THERE IS A LIGHT...
ABOUT WHERE THE
CAMP SHOULD BE!

WE'D BETTER
PLAY SAFE
AND LEAVE
ROSE HERE
WITH THE
HORSES!

IT MIGHT BE THAT
OUTRUNKER, GAMB, FROM
A HIDE-OUT OF THE PAST!
BUT, HAS GOT A LOT OF
COOKED IRONS IN
THE FIRE!

QUIET NOW! WE'LL
GO HAVE A LOOK-SEE!

BY WHOM? GET
YOU NAME OF
DUTY?

JEAN VOODOO ...
A LIE!

WATHESE, BOYS!
ON GUARD! FOR
GAMB'S SAKS THIS
WAS GOT TO BE
HANDLED WITHOUT
GUNPLAY!

WANTED ... GIVE ME
JUST A DROP OF
WATER! ... I'M DYIN'!

SURE, VOODOO! ALL
THE WATERS YOU
WANT ... SUPPER YOU
SIGN YOUR SIGNCH
ON END TO OUTRUNK!
THERE'S WATER HERE!

NOT! I'LL SIGN NOTHING!
YOU AND OF THE DEVIL!
I'LL ...



DUTNAM AND HIS MEN DISMOUNT AT THE CARRIAGE.

YOU MEN WANT OUTSIDE
TILL I FINISH WITH VOODER!
I DRAFT WASTE ANYMORE
TIME ON THAT OLD GOAT!

WELL, IF YOU MEN
WANT DIED TO
YOUR RANCH
YET, VOODER!

THERE SHE LAYS,
YOU DARN! TAKE
A LOOK AT IT ...

... AN THEN TAKE A SWELL OF
THIS! YOUR LITTLE OL' GRABBY
GALS IS RUSTED UP
COMPLETE, DUTNAM!
UNITED STATES MARSHAL
HERE AUBREY IS OUTSIDE
NOW, TAKIN' CARE OF
YOUR MEN!

YOU CAN'T ADDRESS
ME WITHOUT A
WARRANT, AUBREY!
YOU'VE GOT NO
PROOF!

NOT GOT A LETTER
YOU STOLE FROM
THE U S MAIL.
DUTNAM, AN
OTHER EVIDENCE
ENOUGH TO PUT
YOU AWAY FOR A
LONG STRETCH!

A SHORT WHILE LATER...

THE PRISONERS ARE
ALL SAFE IN JAIL, MISTER
VOODER ... AND, JIM ... I'VE
ASKED SOME TO MARRY
ME, WITH YOUR
PERMISSION...

GLAD TO HEAR
IT, NELSON!
SINCE YOU
FOUND OIL
ON YOUR HAND,
TOO, IT LOOKS
LIKE WE'LL
KEEP IT
IN THE
FAMILY!

VOODER? WHIMMY-VOODER!
AINT YOU BARE EYES
FOR OLD WOODEN YET?

CANT DO IT,
MISTER! GOTTA
TAKE THE
PRISONERS IN
TO THE BIG CITY!
S'LONG!



"Morty, may I speak to you a minute?"

Morty Drake, top hand of the Barbed-N Ranch, peered across the shaded coolness of the tack room. Ella Newton, the boss's good-looking daughter, stood in the doorway. He dropped the rag with which he was shining the silver inlays of his best Texas saddle and hurried toward her.

"All the minutes you want," he grinned. "Gosh, you look pretty. Rack on every cowpoke in the county'll be jealous o' me at the dance Saturday night. An' not just 'cause I'm gonna grab off most o' the rodeo prizes in the afternoon, either."

Ella frowned. "I wish you'd stop boasting, Morty. You'd be lots nicer if you weren't so sure of yourself."

"I've got a right to be that way," he returned cockily. "I'm the best bronco-ridin' an' ropin' in these parts. An' I'm not half bad when it comes to bull-doggin'. Fact is, I'd be willing to bet I'm just as good as that champ from Wyomin', Cheyenne Fred. Now, what's on your mind?"

"I'm afraid I can't go to the rodeo dance with you," Ella said quietly.

Morty took a deep breath and laughed. "You're a great one for teasin', Ella."

"I mean it, Morty. I just got a telegram from my friend, Nora Abbott, in Chicago. Her brother's arrivin' tomorrow to ride in the rodeo. Naturally, he'll stay here at the ranch and so . . ."

"I get it!" interrupted Morty. "You'd rather go to the dance with him."

"Not at all. But, since he's our

guest, it's my duty to see that he enjoys himself and has a partner for the dance."

"Humph!" snorted Morty. "Did you say he was gonna enter the rodeo contests?"

Ella nodded. "Yes. He's a fine rider and . . ."

His guffaw stopped her. "I'll bet!" he exclaimed scornfully. "Prob'ly wears knee pants an' rides one o' those postage-stamp Eastern saddles."

"You're wrong, Morty. He . . ."

He ignored the interruption. "Well, by the time he gets through ridin' against me, he'll wish he'd stayed back in Chicago with the rest o' the green-horns. What's his name?"

A strange smile curved Ella's lips. "Ferdinand Holmworthy Abbott."

"Great guns!" Morty howled with laughter. Under cover of his merriment, Ella walked out of the room.

Morty and Chub Johnson, his special crony, planned a raucous welcome for "Ferdie, the Tenderfoot", as they nicknamed the stranger. But, when Ella's guest climbed out of the buckboard the next afternoon, they were both so dumbfounded, they forgot their plans. Ferdinand Holmworthy Abbott was even more of a "dude" than they had imagined.

From the top of his soft, round hat to the tip of his polished laced boots, over which were fitted leather knee leggings, Ferdie was the perfect picture of how the well-dressed cowboy should NOT look. His shirt was pale blue silk, his neckerchief, red satin embroidered in gold. His gloves were fawn-colored with wrist-gauntlets having at least on

eight-inch flare. And his spurs were short and straight.

When the front door had closed behind Ella and Ferdie, Chub found his voice. "Jimmy Crickets, Marty! I wouldn't b'lieve it, if I hadn't seen it!"

Marty nodded. "Me, either." A grin spread over his face. "Wait till tomorrow, Chub. That greaser's gonna be the sickest dude that ever come auto the fast an' wiped a cowboy's gall!"

The rodeo grounds were ablaze with color and alive with noise the next day, when Marty strolled toward the chutes where the bulldoggers were gathering for the afternoon's first event. He was grinning broadly. The big prize money was as good as his now! He had looked over the contestants and knew he could outride and outrope any and all of them. As for Ferdie, he wasn't wasting a thought on that dude.

"Hey, Marty! Wait!"

He stopped. By the time he turned, Chub was coming to a halt a few feet away and pointing a pudgy forefinger. "Look at Ferdie over by the corral!"

Marty's eyes followed the pointing finger. And his jaw dropped. The man striding along the corral fence couldn't be Ferdie! Ferdie wouldn't be wearing a regular outfit, well-worn Stetson, red bandanna, old leather chaps, high-heeled boots and silver, star-roeled spurs. The man waved a greeting. Marty gasped. It WAS Ferdie!

At that moment, the announcer's voice rang out, calling all entrants for the bulldogging contest. Dazedly, Marty walked toward the chutes. He couldn't understand how Ferdie had turned into a real Westerner, so suddenly. Why, the dude even walked like a cowhand.

Marty did not understand what happened that afternoon, either. In all the contests, he ran second to "Ferdie, the Tenderfoot." After the last one, he was walking, shoulders and spirits dropping, toward the corral, when he came face-to-face with Ella and Ferdie. The latter held out his hand.

"Congratulations, Drake," he smiled. "You put on a mighty swell show. You were real competition!"

Marty ignored the hand and the words, and glared at Ella. "You said he was a tenderfoot."

"No, I didn't," Ella said, smiling. "I just let you think he was. I tried to tell you all about him the other day, but you were so busy blowing your own horn, you wouldn't let me talk. So I decided to teach you not to be so cocky. I persuaded Ferdie to help me by pretending to be a dude, so you would think you were going to have everything your own way. Kind of a shock, wasn't it?"

Marty gestured at Ferdie, still standing with outstretched hand. "What's his real name?"

"Ferdinand Holsworthy Abbott," laughed Ella. "But most folks up in Wyoming call him 'Cheyenne Fred.'"

Marty gulped, reddened to the roots of his hair and then reached for Ferdie's hand. "Put 'er there, pardner!" he chuckled. "After this, I'll button my lip every time I feel like sayin' how good I am."

Ella linked her arm through his. "If that's a promise, Marty, I'll get Ferdie another girl for the dance—unless you object to playing 'second fiddle.'"

Marty grinned. "Haven't I been playin' 'second fiddle' all afternoon... an' to 'Ferdie, the Tenderfoot', too?"







"AT THE CLOSE OF THE DANCE DON JULIO CLAPPED FOR SILENCE."

"AMIGOS! TONIGHT MY DAUGHTER, YVETTE, HAS AGREED TO CHOOSE A HUSBAND FROM HER MANY SUITORS!"

"I KNOW NOT WHOM TO CHOOSE! SO I HAVE DECIDED TO WED HIM WHO BOONED ME THE PEARLS OF LORETTA!"

"FIRST OF THE FOLKS WERE FLABBERGASTED AT HER WORDS! BUT DON JULIO WAS DUPED ANYWAY!"

"HAVE YOU LOST YOUR SENSES, YVETTE? THOSE PEARLS ARE SACRED! NO ONE WOULD DARE TO STEAL THEM FOR YOU!"

"WHICH MEANS MY FATHER, THAT I SHALL NEVER HAVE TO MARRY!"

"THAT OLD DON WHEN SHE'D TOUCHED HIM, BUT HE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!"

"YOU ARE LEAVING, DON MIGUEL?"

"SI, SEÑORITA! I HAVE URGENT BUSINESS! UNTIL I RETURN AGAIN!"

"A FEW MINUTES LATER, DON MIGUEL AND HIS SERVANT, JOSE, RODE AWAY FROM THE RANCHO."

"WHERE DO WE GO, DON MIGUEL?"

"TO LORETTA! TO WIN A LADY'S HAND!"

"THREE DAYS LATER THEY RALLIED UP AT THE LORETO MISSION IN BAJA CALIFORNIA."



"WELCOME MY SONS! WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS MISSION?"

"I WISH TO ATONE FOR A GREIVOUS SIN BY PRAYING ALL NIGHT IN THE CHURCH, PADRE!"

"THE GOOD PADRE BELIEVED MIGUEL YAKEN AND PRAYED WITH HIM TILL MIDNIGHT."



"SUCH MATCHLESS SACRILESS DEARLS! SHALL WONDROUS BENEDICTA YAKEN GRACE THEM!"

"WHEN THE PADRE LEFT THE CHURCH MIGUEL STRUCK HIM DOWN."



"DON MIGUEL! THE DEED IS DONE! HE HAS FALLEN!"

"BEGING AROUND THE MONKS! I SHALL JOIN YOU SHORTLY!"

"MIGUEL AT TOO SPEED, MIGUEL STRIPPED THE SACRED STATUE OF THE DEARLS."



"JUST AS HE AND JOSE WERE RIDING AWAY, PADRE LUIS REVED AN OATH THAT HAD BEEN DONE."



"SOOORRO! THE SACRED DEARLS ARE GONE! ALL WHO TOUCH THEM SHALL PERISH!"

"DAY AND NIGHT, MIGUEL AND JOSE RODE NORTH."



"JOSE JOSE! ONCE ACROSS THE BORDER WE ARE SAFE!"

"JUST AS THEY CROSSED INTO CALIFORNIA,
MICHEL'S HORSE WENT LAME."



"DISMOUNT, JOSE! I
WILL RIDE THE
JOURNEY WITH
YOUR HORSE!"

"BUT BEWARE THE
MISSION SOLDIERS!
IF THEY ARE
FOLLOWING, I
SHALL BE KILLED!"

"MICHEL LAUGHED AN MOUNTED
JOSE'S HORSE."



"THEN MY GOOD JOSE, YOU
WILL HAVE TO WEAR OUT
YOUR SHOE LEATHER."

"THAT WAS SUNDOWN WHEN MICHEL
DISMOUNTED AT THE RANCHO."



"YOUR DAUGHTER,
DON JULIO! WHERE
IS SHE?"

"THE WICKED
GIRL IS ON
THE BLUFF
ABOVE THE
SEA! AND I
KNOW BECAUSE
SHE DOES NOT
FALL INTO IT!"

"DON MICHEL MADE TEACHE UP TO
BLUFF."



"AS IT IS SO WARM AND
STILL! AS IF A STORM
WERE NEARING!"

"WHEN THEY HE POURED THE
PEARLS INTO HER LAP."



"KADOE HIA!
THE PEARLS
OF LORETTA!"

"SI, SEÑORITA!
AND NOW YOU
SHALL WED
ME!"



"THEY ARE ACCURSED!
TAKE THEM AWAY!
TAKE YOURSELF
AWAY, TOO!"

"YOU SHALL WEED
YOUR WORD,
WEEZ.
OR I
SHALL
KILL YOU!"

BEFORE HIS VOICE DIED OUT, LIGHTNING
SPLIT TH' SKY AN' TH' EARTH
STARTED SHAKIN'!

IT IS THE
WORLD'S END!
WE ARE DOOMED
BECAUSE YOU
STOLE THE
PEARL!

NONSENSE! IT IS
ONLY AN EARTHQUAKE!
LET US HURRY TO
YOUR CASA!

THEN TH' GROUND CRACKED OPEN WITH A
TERRIBLE BOOM AN' TH' WHOLE BLANCO
BLUFF SLID INTO TH' SEA!

AN' NARY A SIGN O' NINEZ
OR DON MIGUEL OR TH'
PEARL WAS EVER
FOUND!

GOSH, THAT
WAS SOME
STORY...
DANGEROUS
PETS!

DID IT REALLY
HAPPEN?

SEARCH ME! ALL I KNOW
IS THERE'S NO PEARL
ON TH' LOPEITO MISSION
STATUS... AN' THAT'S
WHAT I WERE
HAPPENED TO 'EM!



